



The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning™

2017

Volume 7/Issue 2

Article 2

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Jing Yao, School of Foreign Languages, Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China, hityaojing@163.com

Xiaohong Li, School of Foreign Languages, Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China, frannys@126.com

Recommended Citations:

APA

Yao, J. & Li, X. (2017). Are Chinese undergraduates ready for autonomous learning of English listening? – A survey on students' learning situation. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 7(2), 21-35.

MLA

Jing Yao, and Xiaohong Li. "Are Chinese undergraduates ready for autonomous learning of English listening? – A survey on students' learning situation." *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning* 7.2 (2017): 21-35.

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The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, 2017(2), pp. 21-35

Are Chinese Undergraduates Ready for Autonomous Learning of English Listening? – A Survey on Students’ Learning Situation

Jing Yao¹, Xiaohong Li²

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received November 1, 2016

Revisions completed April 24, 2017

Published June 28, 2017

Key Words:

Language learning

Autonomous learning

Teachers’ role

English listening learning

EFL teaching

ABSTRACT

Chinese EFL non-English major undergraduates are encouraged to conduct English listening autonomous learning in universities, but their attitude and learning practice are still unknown to both the institution and the language teachers. The study aims to reveal students’ perceptions of English listening autonomous learning through a questionnaire survey and follow-up semi-structured interviews. Results show that more than half of the 229 participants are not active in the listening autonomous learning. Some students have not realized the importance of English learning, whereas others lack effective learning methods and self-discipline. Specific suggestions are proposed for language teachers to support learners’ listening autonomous learning in the Chinese context.

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English learning and teaching is given great importance in China from the government to the common households. *Tertiary-Level English Course Teaching Requirement (Syllabus)* has been made and issued by the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education of China. Children in China, in general, are required to receive formal English language education from the third year of primary school, and the language teaching and learning goes through the whole school education, including the undergraduate, postgraduate and PHD programs. CET-4 (College English Test-Band 4) and CET-6 (College English Test-Band 6), two high-stake national English exams, are both organized twice a year to assess non-English major university students’ English proficiency. TEM-4 (Test for English Majors-Band 4) and TEM-8 (Test

¹ School of Foreign Languages, Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China, hityaojing@163.com, 0086-18946000507

² School of Foreign Languages, Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China, frannys@126.com, 0086-13904502472

for English Majors-Band 8), another two high-stake national English exams, are both organized once a year to assess English major undergraduates' language proficiency. NECCS (National English Contest for College Students) is another annual nation-wide English exam for all undergraduates and postgraduates aimed at arousing their interest in English learning and assessing their language proficiency from a more practical perspective. To give their children an edge, a number of Chinese parents nowadays register them for English class after school. Children attending the extra English classes range from kindergarten kids to senior middle school students, who are trying to get better prepared for the coming University Entrance Examination.

In a large number of universities of China, English is a compulsory course for the first-year and second-year non-English major undergraduates. In the university where the authors teach, English Course in each semester bears 1.5 credit points. Each semester, students and teachers meet once every week for 16 weeks. Each session lasts for 2 class hours (50 minutes for each class hour). The first-year non-English major undergraduates are all required to learn English Reading and Writing Course. Due to the in-class time limit, students are required to conduct English listening autonomous learning after class. When they enter the second academic year, they can select a different English course to learn each semester. The courses range from specific language skills to literature. There is no English listening autonomous learning requirement for them any more except for students who have selected the English Listening and Speaking Course.

As to the listening autonomous learning in the first academic year, students are required to buy a well-designed listening course book with a disc attached to it. The disc carries user-friendly English listening learning software. After installing the software in a computer, students can do a variety of exercises based on either audio or video materials. Keys are given in the end of each exercise. A number of students have their own laptops to work with, and there is a computer center on campus accessible to students. Students are required to finish learning one unit each week in their spare time, and there is a listening comprehension test in both the mid-term exam and the final exam to assess their achievement. The listening comprehension questions in the exams are all based on the listening materials in the listening exercise book, but newly designed. Such a listening learning mode has already been put in use for almost two semesters, but how the students take it is still unknown to both teachers and the higher-level decision makers. Therefore, this study is aimed to reveal students' attitude towards the present learning mode, their knowledge and application of cognitive listening strategies and meta-cognitive listening learning strategies, their perceptions of their listening learning reality and areas in which they are still in need of teachers' help.

2. Literature Review

Learner autonomy refers to 'the ability to take charge of one's learning' (Holec, 1981). Psychologically, it also involves learners' attitudes that enable them to take responsibility for their own learning (Benson, 1997). Taking responsibility for one's own learning empowers the learners and leads them to life-long learning (Koban-Koç & Koç, 2016; Egel, 2009). Factors that influence language learners' independent learning include their disposition and ability to analyze their own strength, weakness and their language needs, to set reasonable targets and overall goals, to make feasible plans to reach the goals, to select materials and activities, to work without supervision and to evaluate their own progress (Sheerin, 1997).

Both institution and teachers have responsibilities for supporting students' autonomous learning. Bloor & Bloor (1988) negotiate for the revision of syllabus to meet students' needs. They argue that allowing language learners to decide where they study and what materials they use enhances their commitment to study, which is the first step to autonomous learning (Bloor & Bloor, 1988). Teacher-based approaches to the development of autonomy emphasise the role of the teacher and teacher education in the practice of fostering autonomy among learners (Benson, 2013). Roles the teacher plays in autonomous

learning include facilitator, counsellor and resource (Voller, 1997). The study of student teachers' beliefs in learner autonomy in language learning shows that student teachers are positive towards the adoption of learner autonomy principles (Balçıkanlı, 2010). Sheerin (1997) maintains that most language learners need teachers' support for greater autonomy in that teachers have the expertise. Consequently, good teachers should be sensitive to learners' language needs and their readiness to become independent learners. Teachers are encouraged to combine language learning strategy instruction with content teaching so as to promote learner autonomy (Yang, 1998; Fang & Zhang, 2012). Houghton, Long & Fanning (1988) suggest that to enhance autonomy and individualization in language learning, teachers should have oral individualized discussion with students while providing written feedback on their assignments. Oral feedback better explains and reinforces teachers' suggestions for improvement. Besides, the individual discussion fits students' personal interests and needs, and helps avoid students' embarrassment, teacher interruptions and the rest of the class distraction. However, Benson (1997) points out that due to the deep-rooted methodologies and ideologies of learning, even in self-access and learning training, students are often being encouraged to apply the same conventional methods, materials and techniques to themselves.

As to English listening autonomous learning research, a number of studies have been carried out from a variety of perspectives. To begin with, the listening autonomous learning effect has been studied in comparison with the traditional class teaching and learning. Wang (2010) conducted an empirical study of this kind among 102 Chinese second-year non-English major undergraduates with the same listening proficiency. During two months, all the participants were given the same instruction by the same teacher, but the experimental group did exercises by themselves while the control group did the exercises together in class. Results show that students who had conducted listening autonomous learning became more motivated as they spent more time on learning than the control group and made better use of class time than before, though the posttest results didn't show much difference between the two groups. Secondly, ways to monitor students' listening autonomous learning have been explored. Wang (2009) shared the method of monitoring post-graduates' multi-modality listening autonomous learning on the internet. Thirdly, more researches have been undertaken to explore ways to encourage learners' listening autonomous learning. Multimodality teaching has been found effective in increasing students' interest, which could lead to more autonomous learning (Jiang, 2016). According to Guo (2012), training of meta-cognitive strategies contributes to Chinese EFL learners' autonomous listening behaviors, as 30 Chinese non-English major undergraduates who had received one semester's meta-cognitive strategy training gained significantly higher marks in posttest than in pretest, while the control group who had not received any meta-cognitive strategy training gained nearly the same marks in the two tests. Listening autonomous learning can also be motivated by asking learners to write listening log, which enables them to monitor their performance and helps raise their awareness of using strategies to aid comprehension and learning (Kemp, 2010). Meta-textual skills introduction and meta-cognitive strategy instruction are also found effective in promoting learners' autonomous listening to podcasts (Cross, 2014). The learner in the case study could exploit the podcasts in an increasingly informed and sophisticated manner to develop her listening ability with regular guidance and feedback. Last but not least, learners' attitudes towards listening autonomous learning and their perceptions of their listening autonomous learning abilities have also been touched. Wang (2010) found, in the survey of 51 Chinese second-year non-English major undergraduates, that students do want to have more control over the content, pace and place in which they learn listening. In the mean time, most students are not confident about their autonomous learning ability yet, as some express need for their teacher to plan their study, and most of them think they can learn something new from the teacher. However, factors contributing to tertiary-level Chinese EFL learners' listening autonomous learning behavior have not been investigated so far. Areas where learners need teachers' help the most in conducting listening autonomous learning also need to be clearly identified. Given the situation, this study is aimed at investigating Chinese non-English major

undergraduates' English listening autonomous learning practice, abilities, reasons for their behaviors and needs to be met.

3. Research Methodology

In this study, both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview were used to investigate Chinese EFL non-English major undergraduates' attitudes towards the listening autonomous learning mode, their knowledge and usage of cognitive listening strategies and meta-cognitive listening learning strategies, their listening autonomous learning behaviour, causes and areas in which they need teacher's help in particular in conducting listening autonomous learning.

3.1. Participants

Two hundred and twenty-nine Chinese first-year non-English major undergraduates from one of the top universities in China took part in the questionnaire survey. The participants of this study major in a variety of subjects, and they are in nearly the same age, 18 years old or so. They come from different parts of China with similar English learning background and proficiency level. However, there is obvious difference in their English listening and speaking abilities due to the difference in their previous learning environment and effort each individual has put in. Most of them are male, since an overwhelming proportion of the participants are science students, and the majority of the participants had passed CET-4 before the study was conducted. Ten of the participants involved in the questionnaire survey were invited to attend the semi-structured one-to-one interview. They are all male, from different classes of different schools. Despite different personalities, learning attitudes and approaches, they are on the intermediate English proficiency level among all the participants. All in all, the participants in this study are representative of China's EFL non-English major undergraduates.

3.2. Research Instrument

Questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to investigate Chinese EFL non-English major undergraduates' perceptions of English listening autonomous learning, their attitudes towards this learning mode, their learning practice and their needs to be met in conducting such learning. Several statements on each aspect were made but were deliberately put in different parts of the questionnaire. In total, 47 statements about students' English listening autonomous learning were made. For each statement, participants were asked to choose one from the six choices, A, B, C, D, E, and F, to show to what degree they agree. Follow-up semi-structured interviews were carried out to gain a better and deeper understanding of the learners' English listening autonomous learning reality, needs, and reasons behind. See Appendix B for the broad questions the researchers included in the 'interview guide'.

Language elicitation prompts were used to help respondents go further and increase the richness and depth of the responses. For example, the researchers asked respondents to elaborate on the salient content words they had used by saying that "You have used the word '...'. What do you mean by that?" To elicit more details and for clarification, prompts such as 'Such as?' and 'For example?' were also used.

The language used in both the questionnaire and the interview is Chinese, the native language of both the teacher researchers and their students, to avoid misunderstanding. Participants were invited to attend the interview in classrooms where they usually had English classes to make them feel relaxed. Before the start of the study participants were informed of the research purpose of the study and their consent was obtained.

3.3. *Research Procedures*

The anonymous questionnaire was handed out to students of 10 classes of different majors to complete at the end of the spring semester of 2014/2015 academic year. Consent of the participants had been obtained beforehand for using the information provided only for research purpose. The 10 classes did not complete the questionnaire at exactly the same time due to their different class schedule, but they completed it in the same week. It was collected right after the participants completed it. In total, 229 students gave answers to all the questions in the questionnaire. Their choices to each question were calculated to find out the percentages of students' degrees of agreement and disagreement to each statement.

According to the results of the questionnaire survey, questions were designed for the follow-up one-to-one semi-structured interview to gain a deeper understanding of students' English listening autonomous learning situation and the reasons behind. Ten of the questionnaire survey participants were invited to attend the interview. With their consent, one-to-one semi-structured interview was conducted and recorded in a familiar classroom when they were free. Shortly after the interview, the whole recording was transcribed by the teacher researchers. In the interview, broad questions listed in Appendix II were asked. Language elicitation prompts such as "You have used the word '...'. What do you mean by that?" were used to ask interviewees to elaborate on their responses. Each interview lasted about 20 minutes. Then the researchers conducted inductive data analysis procedures. Both general and generic analytical moves such as 'coding' and 'memoing' were used for the latent content analysis. Coding was conducted for several times to gain 'a new cut on the data' (Richards, 2005). After that, second-level coding was conducted to find patterns that emerge across individual accounts. The whole coding process was accompanied by writing memos on thoughts and ideas that come to the researchers' mind to help them gain more insights into the issue. Transcripts of the interviews to be presented in the paper went through the editing and cutting process to avoid redundancy.

4. **Results**

4.1. *Learners' attitude and motivation*

On the whole, students have recognized the importance of autonomous learning. Nearly half of the 229 participants (49.8 percent) strongly agree that autonomous learning is as indispensable as teacher's class teaching. While 32 percent of the participants definitely agree to it, only 4.37 percent of the participants express disagreement.

However, a majority of students' English listening autonomous learning is mainly motivated by a variety of exams, such as mid-term exam, final exam, CET-4 and CET-6. More than two thirds of the participants (71.2 percent) agree to different degrees that without exams, they will not conduct English listening autonomous learning. As to students' interest, more than half of the participants show dislike to listening to audio materials: Participants who express dislike of course book listening exercises make up 59 percent of the total participants who express dislike of doing CET listening exercises, 64.6 percent while participants who express dislike of listening to English news broadcast, stories or essays make up 72.5 percent. In contrast, a majority of students enjoy watching English movies and other video materials in their spare time. In total, 80.3 percent of the participants show their interest of different degrees in watching English video materials.

4.2 *Learners' perception of their listening autonomous learning outcome and ability*

Most students are optimistic about their listening autonomous learning outcome. About two thirds of the participants (64.6 percent) agree to different degrees that their listening ability has got improved via autonomous learning. Yet a large number of students are not confident about conducting listening autonomous learning: Nearly half of the participants (49.4 percent) feel to different degrees that they are not able to find suitable learning materials for themselves; the same percentage of the participants don't think they are able to conduct regular autonomous learning without their teacher's supervision; about three fifths of the participants (60.7 percent) doubt to certain degrees that they are able to finish the learning task without their teacher's supervision; about half of the participants (51.1 percent) express uncertainty about their ability to conduct autonomous learning effectively; and about two fifths of the participants (41.6 percent) still feel to certain degrees that they can't adapt themselves to the listening autonomous learning mode.

4.3. Learners' listening autonomous learning practice

Many students fail to conduct regular autonomous learning, and the amount of practice they had is far from enough: more than half of the participants (56.7 percent) fail to finish the assigned listening exercises in the course book each week; similar percentage of the participants (55 percent) are afraid to certain degrees that they cannot finish all the required listening exercises in the end of the semester; about three fourths of the participants (72.9 percent) agree to different degrees that they practice listening only before exams; and about two thirds of the participants (66.8 percent) admit that they have nearly got themselves nothing to learn except the listening course book.

4.4. Learners' application of cognitive and meta-cognitive learning strategies

On the whole, a large number of students have knowledge of the important cognitive and meta-cognitive learning strategies. Many can apply some of the cognitive learning strategies properly (see Table 1), but the number of students who can actively put meta-cognitive learning strategies in use is limited.

As to cognitive strategy application, about half of the participants (50.6 percent) don't turn to their teacher or classmates when they encounter difficulties or problems in autonomous learning, although many (65.5 percent) admit that they know they should. In terms of meta-cognitive strategies, students also admit their knowledge: about three fourths of the participants (74.6 percent) say that they know they should set specific goals for autonomous learning; over half of the participants (57.9 percent) say that they know that they should make detailed study plan for autonomous learning including learning content and pace; about three fourths of the participants (72.8 percent) say that they know they should monitor their learning performance and progress; and similar percentage of the participants (76.4 percent) say that they know that they should often reflect on and evaluate their learning performance and effect. In terms of application of the meta-cognitive strategies, more than half of the participants (55.4 percent) maintain that they can decide what to learn according to the context, such as memorizing the vocabulary, listening for the details and so on. However, despite their knowledge of such important meta-cognitive learning strategies as planning, monitoring and evaluating, a large percentage of the participants fail to apply them in their learning practice (see Table 2).

Table 1.

Learner's application of cognitive strategies

Statements	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Slightly agree %
I selectively memorize new words and phrases I meet in the listening materials.	11.8	31.4	26.2
While I listen, I not only pay attention to the content of the listening materials, but also pay attention to the speakers' pronunciation and tone.	15.3	24	26.2
Before listening, I first predict the content with the help of my background knowledge.	27.9	31	18.3
While I listen to English, I often guess the meaning of the new words according to the context.	23.1	30.1	21.8
In autonomous learning, I can apply different learning methods for learning different materials such as reading aloud, taking shorthand notes, listening for general ideas, listening for details and so on.	10.1	20.6	22.8

Table 2.

Learners' application of meta-cognitive strategies

Statements	Slightly disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %
I've set clear stage goals for my listening autonomous learning.	30.1	28.8	8.3
I've made detailed study plans for my listening learning, including the content and pace.	26.2	30.6	10.9
I often monitor the carrying out of my listening study plan. For example, I regularly check how far I've gone.	31.6	22.8	8.8
I often reflect on and evaluate my listening learning so as to find out the problems and solutions.	24.9	21.4	9.6

4.5. Learners' Dependence on Teacher

Many students still believe that learning with teacher's guidance is the most effective. Over three fourths of the participants (78.2 percent) agree to different degrees that teacher's guidance is an important factor that influences their learning effect. A similar percentage of the participants (77.4 percent) think that listening learning should be incorporated into class teaching and learning and should not be totally left under their control. A majority of the participants (89.5 percent) agree to different degrees that the teacher should provide more listening guidance and training in class. Many students hope they could conduct listening autonomous learning in a learning centre in assigned class hours. Specific help they need from their teachers includes guidance, reminding, monitoring and evaluating (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Areas in which learners need teachers' help

Statements	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Slightly agree %
I think teacher should tell me explicitly about autonomous learning methods, such as how to take notes, how to listen for details and how to listen for general ideas.	24.9	31.9	19.7
I think teacher should often remind students of the content to learn, such as which unit to learn each week.	25.3	44.1	15.7
I think teacher should check regularly the exercises we've done in the listening course book.	16.7	31.6	26.8
I think teacher should test students' listening autonomous learning achievement regularly.	19.7	31	21.8

In the follow-up interview, the participants specify three main areas in which they are badly in need of teacher's help. One is teacher's supervision and guidance. Another is teacher's supply of suitable learning materials. The last one is teacher's introduction to listening tactics and methods. As to reasons why students need their teachers' supervision, the interviewees provide insights from such different perspectives as lack of motivation, lack of self-discipline and the influence of traditional teaching and learning style.

In terms of reasons why students don't apply such meta-cognitive strategies as setting goals, planning, monitoring and evaluating while they know clearly the benefit of applying those strategies, the interviewees' explanations point to five different factors: unawareness of the importance of listening learning, being unable to set a reachable goal, laziness, being unable to allocate time properly and different learning habits.

As to reasons why students fail to finish the required learning tasks, the interviewees attribute it to lack of time, unawareness of the importance of English learning, lack of clear understanding of their current level, little interest and little motivation due to the difficulty in making progress in a short period of time.

As to why students don't like to learn the outside listening materials, such as the English news broadcast, stories and CET listening exercises, lack of interest in such kinds of materials and lack of desirable learning materials appear to be the main reasons. English movies and songs are mentioned to be their favorite.

5. Discussion

The result shows that students in general welcome the listening autonomous learning mode and are confident of self-improvement. Students do like to have control on their own study, such as what to study, where to study and how to study (Wang, 2010). However, more than half of the students spend little time practicing listening in their spare time. They fail to finish the required learning tasks, though a number of these students do spend some time watching English movies and TV series to improve their listening ability. All in all, they are not active in listening autonomous learning. Four factors are revealed in this study. To start with, some are not motivated partially because English course bears "too few" points and they do not see much relevance of English to their future work or life. To those who are active at the start, shortage of suitable materials and lack of right method frustrate them and discourage them from going further. Secondly, many students still lack self-discipline. Though some students set goals and make plans, they fail to carry them out because of inertia and the outside distractions such as

entertainment. Consequently, many students feel the need for teachers' supervision. Thirdly, they are not interested in doing listening exercises due to the fact that they have done too much, as several student interviewees complain. Alternatively, they watch English movies and TV series for practice, which are more appealing to them. The exposure to the target language is believed to be the key to second language acquisition (Hann, 2013). The last reason is related to the "intangible" feature of listening learning outcome. On one hand, as two student interviewees put it, it is difficult to see the progress in listening learning. As it is not instantly rewarding, some students give it up shortly after they give it a shot. On the other hand, it is difficult for students to position their current level among their peers according to one student interviewee. Social influence is an important factor that influences one's learning and decision making (Poldin, Valeeva & Yudkevich, 2015). As listening is only part of the assessment and the assessment result is kept private, students have no idea about their listening level among their peers and hence see no urgency of working hard so as not to fall behind.

The findings indicate that a large number of students can apply the cognitive listening strategies, but less than half of the students can put the meta-cognitive learning strategies in use, though most of the students know they should. Reasons for their failure to apply meta-cognitive learning strategies such as setting goals, planning, monitoring and evaluating vary. A number of students are unaware of the importance of English learning. For one thing, "English course bears too few credit points", as four of the ten student interviewees remarked. For another, a number of students can not see relevance of English to their future work and life, as six of the student interviewees stated. Some are reluctant to take action because it is troublesome to practice listening given things required such as earphones, mobile phone as a player and listening course book, as two of the interviewees complained. Some can't set themselves a feasible goal, as two of the interviews mentioned. A goal too high frustrates them and diminishes their motivation to learn. This is also the reason why participants in the experimental group (the "zero class hour" group) express need for their teacher's help in making study plans (Wang, 2010). Some are in short of self-discipline, which was mentioned by all the interviewees. Distractions can easily spoil their daily plan. Therefore, tertiary-level English teachers in China are still playing the role of "learning regulator" besides roles of "study guide", "classroom organizer" and "resource facilitator" (Fang & Zhang, 2012).

A majority of students hope that their teacher could introduce to them listening learning methods and tactics, remind them of the listening learning tasks, check their performance and provide them with tutorials. On the whole, students are in need of teacher's supervision and instruction. Many students need their teacher's push to do more listening exercises, and they are in want of their language teacher's expertise in effective and efficient English listening learning. When students are apparently not ready for listening autonomous learning, the desired mode leaves a lot for language teachers to do. To support students' listening autonomous learning, teachers should, first of all, arouse their desire to learn (Breen & Mann, 1997). On one hand, teachers might raise students' awareness of the importance of English learning by explicit explanation. On the other hand, teachers might design more interesting classes so as to increase students' interest in English learning. When students have the disposition to learn, teachers should take measures to support them and help them develop their ability to learn (Sheerin, 1997). To enable students to learn efficiently on their own, language teachers might introduce and illustrate efficient and effective listening learning methods. Listening to each student's voice and addressing their individual problems could avoid their embarrassment, teacher's interruption and other students' distraction in class, increase their involvement, build their confidence and enhance their autonomy (Houghton et al., 1988). Therefore, teachers might discuss with students their learning goals and plans individually in tutorials for the development of their autonomy. All the way through middle school to high school, Chinese students have been required to follow teachers' guidance closely and have got accustomed to learning for good performance in quizzes and exams. The new and totally different autonomous learning mode is apparently hard for a large number of the first-year undergraduates to

accept and adapt to. While students are still in short of self-discipline in learning, teachers might interfere to guarantee that learning happens. After all, teachers are still managers of the learning program (Higgs, 1988). By gradually lengthening the period after which they check students' listening autonomous learning performance, teachers could gradually give control back to students. To improve students' ability to monitor their listening learning performance and reflect on it, teachers might ask students to keep listening log, which has been found beneficial by Kemp (2010) as it helps learners engage with their listening learning experiences, develop meta-cognitive strategies and make conscious decisions. Teachers might also help form after-class study groups, because being around autonomous and motivated peers has been found having a positive effect on learners' own autonomy (Chang, 2007).

6. Conclusion and Implication

Developing English listening autonomous learning among Chinese non-English major undergraduates is a far more complicated issue than expected. Deep-rooted traditional teacher-dependent learning style in the Chinese context hinders the movement towards learners' autonomous learning. The investigation this study conducted sheds light on factors that influence Chinese learners' listening autonomous learning behaviour and outcome. First, some students are not motivated because they see little relevance of English study to their future work or life. Some others feel frustrated due to shortage of suitable learning materials and lack of right learning methods. Secondly, a large number of students still lack self-discipline as they are accustomed to following teachers' guidance, hence their need for teacher's supervision. Thirdly, many students are fed up with doing listening "exercises" because of the painful learning experience in the past – doing a huge amount of exercises for the preparation of university entrance examination. Last but not least, one's listening level and progress are hard to identify. Consequently, a number of students lose their inner drive for self-improvement.

In accordance, specific suggestions are proposed for teachers to support students' autonomous learning. Teachers should, first of all, arouse students' desire to learn by emphasizing the importance of English learning and designing more interesting classes. Next, teachers should take measures to help students develop the ability to learn by demonstrating effective listening learning methods. Thirdly, teachers might discuss with students their learning goals and plans individually to meet each one's special needs. Fourthly, teachers might supervise students' performance while they are still in short of self-discipline in learning, and give control back to them gradually by lengthening the period after which they check students' listening autonomous learning performance. Fifthly, teachers might ask students to keep listening log to improve their ability to monitor their listening learning performance and reflect on it. Finally, teachers might help form after-class study groups for cooperative learning.

In future research, open questions might be added to similar questionnaires because answers to certain questions may vary. Space for students to share their individual experience and thoughts might lead researchers to more insight into the issue concerned. Think-aloud protocol might be employed to evaluate listening learners' capacity for using cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, because what they say they can do may not necessarily be the same as what they can do in reality due to overestimation or underestimation. Empirical studies might also be conducted to explore effective ways for teachers to support learners' English listening autonomous learning.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire on tertiary-level English listening autonomous learning mode

School () Major ()

Please read the following 47 statements about your English listening learning and decide to what degree you agree to them. A stands for 'strongly agree'; B, 'agree'; C, 'slightly agree'; D, 'slightly disagree'; E, 'disagree'; F, 'strongly disagree'. Please circle the corresponding letter for each statement.

1. I prefer the listening autonomous learning mode to traditional class teaching mode, because I can take control of the content and pace. A B C D E F
2. I think teacher should often remind students of the content to learn, such as which unit to learn each week. A B C D E F
3. I can select materials suitable for me to learn. A B C D E F
4. I selectively memorize new words and phrases I meet in the listening materials. A B C D E F
5. My listening level has been increased through autonomous learning. A B C D E F
6. While I learn listening on my own, I consciously take key information down in shorthand/take notes. A B C D E F
7. I often reflect on and evaluate my listening learning so as to find out the problems and solutions. A B C D E F
8. I like listening to English news broadcast, stories and essays. A B C D E F
9. I know clearly that in autonomous learning one makes detailed study plan including the content and pace. A B C D E F
10. I think teacher should check regularly the exercises we've done in the listening course book. A B C D E F
11. While I listen, I not only pay attention to the content of the listening materials, but also pay attention to the speakers' pronunciation and tone. A B C D E F
12. I've made detailed study plans for my listening learning, including the content and pace. A B C D E F
13. I hope there is a learning common for us to learn listening autonomously, such as English autonomous learning centre. A B C D E F
14. I feel that I can learn listening autonomously without teacher's supervision. A B C D E F
15. If my teacher doesn't remind me, I might forget the autonomous learning tasks. A B C D E F

16. I like watching English movies and other English videos in my spare time. A B C D E F
17. I know clearly that if I encounter difficulties or problems in autonomous learning, I should turn to my teacher and classmates. A B C D E F
18. I think that class teaching and learning is the most effective way to learn English. A B C D E F
19. I often monitor the carrying out of my listening study plan. For example, I check regularly how far I've gone. A B C D E F
20. Autonomous learning is as indispensable as teacher's in-class teaching. A B C D E F
21. I often turn to my teacher and classmates when I encounter difficulties or problems in listening autonomous learning. A B C D E F
22. I think teacher should tell me explicitly about autonomous learning methods, such as how to take notes, how to listen for details and how to listen for general ideas. A B C D E F
23. I prefer the traditional class listening teaching and learning to the listening autonomous learning mode. A B C D E F
24. I've set clear stage goals for my listening autonomous learning. A B C D E F
25. Except the listening course book, I almost got myself nothing else for listening learning. A B C D E F
26. I can decide what to learn according to the context, such as memorizing the vocabulary, listening for the details and so on. A B C D E F
27. I hope to continue to learn listening autonomously in the near future of English learning. A B C D E F
28. I hope to conduct listening autonomous learning during class hours but not in my spare time. A B C D E F
29. I can finish the listening course book exercises each week according to the schedule. A B C D E F
30. I think teacher should test students' listening autonomous learning achievement regularly. A B C D E F
31. I know clearly that one must set clear and specific goals for listening autonomous learning. A B C D E F
32. I won't conduct listening autonomous learning without such exams as mid-term exam, final exam, CET-4 and CET-6. A B C D E F
33. I hope teacher could give more guidance on listening in class in the autonomous learning mode. A B C D E F
34. I think teacher's guidance is an important factor that influences my English learning effect. A B C D E F

35. I can finish all the listening exercises in the listening course book before the semester ends. A B C D E F
36. In autonomous learning, I can apply different learning methods for learning different materials such as reading aloud, taking shorthand notes, listening for general ideas, listening for details and so on. A B C D E F
37. I can adapt myself to the tertiary-level English listening autonomous learning mode. A B C D E F
38. I like learning the listening course book on my own in my spare time. A B C D E F
39. I know clearly that during listening autonomous learning, one must often monitor how well the study plan has been carried out. A B C D E F
40. I feel that I can conduct listening autonomous learning effectively without teacher's help. A B C D E F
41. While I listen to English, I often guess the meaning of the new words according to the context. A B C D E F
42. I think listening learning should be part of class teaching and learning and should not be fully left under students' control. A B C D E F
43. I can finish all the autonomous learning tasks and content without teacher's push and supervision. A B C D E F
44. I know clearly that in the listening autonomous learning process, one must often reflect on and evaluate one's own learning performance and effect. A B C D E F
45. I like to do listening exercises such as the listening comprehension in CET-4 and CET-6 in my spare time. A B C D E F
46. I only practice listening before exams. A B C D E F
47. Before listening, I first predict the content with the help of my background knowledge. A B C D E F

Appendix B

Interview guide questions

1. What is autonomous learning in your opinion?
2. Many students mention that they don't like learning the listening course book, listening to the English news broadcast or stories or doing the CET-4 or CET-6 listening comprehension exercises. Why don't they like doing those things?
3. Most students didn't finish the assigned autonomous learning tasks, let alone getting other listening materials for practice. Some didn't practice listening at all. Why?
4. Students know clearly the role they should play in autonomous learning, namely, setting the goal, making the study plan, monitor the progress and reflecting on and evaluating their own learning effect. However, most students didn't put anything into practice. Why?
5. Students know clearly that in autonomous learning they should monitor their own performance, but they want their teacher to remind them of the learning task, check their assignment and even supervise their performance via tests. Why do students constantly emphasize the need for teacher's involvement in the learner controlled autonomous learning mode?
6. In which aspects do you need teacher's help most in autonomous learning?